MARVEL COMICS
SPIDER-MAN
$1.95 US
$2.65 CAN/UK £1.25
53
DEC
01321
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
PART 4 OF 4
THE EXILE RETURNS
THE SCARLET SPIDER'S GREATEST MOMENT OF GLORY...
THE FALL OF VENOM!

STAN LEE PRESENTS THE SCARLET SPIDER IN

CATHING

THE AWESOME CONCLUSION TO THE EXILE RETURNS

HOWARD MACKIE & TOM LYLE story & art

SCOTT HANNA finishes

STARKINGS/COMICRAFT lettering

KEVIN TINSLEY colors

DANNY FINGEROTH editor

TOM DEFALCO editor in chief

NEW YORK CITY...

THIRTY SECONDS AGO, THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN DUBBED THE SCARLET SPIDER BELIEVED HIS RAGE WOULD BE ENOUGH TO ENABLE HIM TO BEAT VENOM.*

NOW HE REALIZES THAT THAT WASN'T NECESSARILY TRUE.

DIE, IMPOSTOR!

SO THIS IS HOW MY RETURN TO MANHATTAN... TO A LIFE THAT NEVER BELONGED TO ME... ENDS?

STRANGLED TO DEATH WITH THE HOOD OF MY OWN NEWLY CREATED COSTUME?

GUESS I DESERVE IT.

I'M ONLY A CLONE!

*WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #119. --DANNY

STORMS

WEREN'T YOU! GALLANT, TRYING TO DEFEND THE FEMALE SYMBIOTE FROM DYING AT OUR HANDS *...?!

...NOW WE'LL SUCK THE MARROW FROM *BOTH* YOUR BONES!

NEVER SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN IN MY WAY, YOU *FAKE!*

THE *REAL SPIDER-MAN* WOULD HAVE PUT UP A BETTER FIGHT.

HE WOULD HAVE LOST ANYWAY...

...BUT STILL WOULDN'T HAVE DIED SOOO EASILY!

JUST RELAX... YOU'LL BE **DEAD** SOON!

HE'S RIGHT. MIGHT AS WELL STOP STRUGGLING.

THIS END WAS INEVITABLE AS SOON AS I WAS *STUPID* ENOUGH TO COME *BACK* TO NEW YORK... *STUPID* ENOUGH TO PUT ON A COSTUME... *STUPID* ENOUGH TO TRY AND PLAY *HERO!*

JUST RELAX AND GO WITH --

NO!

THERE'S ANOTHER LIFE AT STAKE ... THE FEMALE... SHE APPEARS TO BE HUMAN.

...ENDANGERING INNOCENT LIVES LIKE...

I CAN'T LET VENOM KILL HER. CAN'T LET HIM RUN WILD IN THIS CITY...

...AUNT MAY!

CAN'T TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT!

SHE DIDN'T RAISE ME THAT WAY!

*WEB #119. --D.

BWAM

CAN'T BELIEVE THAT SPIDER-MAN HAS LET VENOM ROAM FREE.

VENOM SPOKE OF THEM HAVING SOME SORT OF *DEAL!*

CAN'T BELIEVE THAT SPIDER-MAN WOULD LET A MONSTER LIKE THIS LOOSE ON THE STREETS...

...*WON'T* BELIEVE IT!

YUMMm! LOOKS LIKE THE LITTLE PHONY IS GOING TO GIVE US A *FIGHT* AFTER ALL!

WHRAAK

MORE THAN A FIGHT!

I'M PLITTING YOU AWAY FOR GOOD...

KWAM

...OR I'M GOING TO DIE TRYING!

AT THE DAILY BUGLE, KEN ELLIS BURNS THE MIDNIGHT OIL.

HE IS A MAN DRIVEN BY HIS CAREER.

A MAN DETERMINED TO GET AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HERO HE HAS DUBBED THE SCARLET SPIDER.

A MAN COMMITTED TO ADVANCING HIS CAREER.

ELLIS.

BEAT IT! CAN'T YOU SEE I'M TRYING TO WRITE A --

MISTER JAMESON.

DON'T SWEAT IT, KID. I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING. HARD TO LET IT GO, huh?

JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU YOU'RE DOING A GREAT JOB.

KEEP IT UP.

JUST STAY OBJECTIVE, SON. DON'T LET THE STORY CONSUME YOU.

TAKE IT FROM ME... IT DOESN'T HELP THINGS.

YEAH... RIGHT!

TIMES SQUARE...

GOT TO LET MY SPIDER-SENSE DO ITS JOB.

YESTERDAY I WAS *RUSTY*... LET MY FEAR OVER-RIDE THE SPIDER-SENSE... AND HE ALMOST *GUTTED* ME. *

THAT'S *NOT* GOING TO HAPPEN AGAIN!

* LAST ISSUE--O.

NICE MOVE, LITTLE FAKER!

HOW'S YOUR STOMACH FEELING?

BETCHA IT HURTS TO BOUNCE AROUND LIKE THIS, huh?

IT'S GOING TO HURT EVER *MORE* WHEN I STRANGLE YOU WITH YOUR OWN INTESTINES!

GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY FOR IMITATING *HIM!*

GOING TO KILL YOU AND EAT YOUR *BRAINS!*

THIS GUY IS *SICK!*

BUT HE'S RIGHT. THE STOMACH IS *KILLING* ME.

THE *PAIN* IS TIRING ME OUT!

NEED TO SLOW HIM DOWN A BIT.

LAST TIME I TRIED THE *IMPACT WEBBING* ON HIM HE SIMPLY RIPPED THROUGH IT.

THIS TIME...

...I'LL UNLOAD A WHOLE BUNCH OF THEM AT HIM!

IT'S GOT TO SLOW HIM DOWN LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO CATCH MY BREATH!

I HOPE.

I DON'T LIKE THIS NEW WEBBING, YOU FRAUD!

IT NEVER STOPS GROWING.

JUST GOING TO MAKE ME *MADDER!*

I'LL LIVE WITH IT!

NO, YOU WON'T.

MEANWHILE...

THE SPIDER SOUGHT TO CONTAIN ME, FATHER.

HE TRIED TO HAVE ME IMPRISONED... CAGED LIKE SOME BROKEN AND SHAMED BEAST!

A KRAVINOFF WILL NOT BE BROKEN!

I USED OUR WEALTH TO GET OUT OF PRISON, FATHER.

AND NOW, I, THE GRIM HUNTER, SON OF KRAVEN, SWEAR TO YOU!...

HERE LIES
ERGEI
RAVINOF
VEN the HUNT
REE AT LAST

...THE HUNT WILL CONTINUE.

AND EITHER THE SPIDER... OR I...

...WILL DIE!

WHILE...

EXHALISTED... STOMACH KILLING ME... STITCHES MIGHT RIP OPEN...

CAN'T WORRY ABOUT IT... HE'S GOING TO TEAR THROUGH THE WEBBING SOON... GOT TO BE ALERT...

GOT TO BE *STRONG*.

I'M STARTING TO BELIEVE I MIGHT ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO BEAT HIM.

GOT TO LET HIM WEAR HIMSELF OUT WHILE I *REGAIN* SOME STRENGTH.

IT'S GOING TO HAVE TO BE BRUTAL...

...VENOM WILL HAVE IT NO OTHER WAY.

STILL CAN'T ACCEPT THAT SPIDER-MAN MADE A *DEAL* WITH HIM.

HAS HE CHANGED SO MUCH SINCE I RECEIVED HIS MEMORIES... HIS VALUES?

OR IS IT *ME* WHO'S CHANGED?

WELL, IN ABOUT ANOTHER MINUTE I'LL HAVE A CHANCE TO SEE WHETHER I'VE CHANGED ENOUGH TO DEFEAT THE LIKES OF VENOM.

WITHIN THE COCOON...

HE'S TRYING TO STOP US!

STOP US FROM DOING THE RIGHT THING.

TRYING TO MAKE US OUT TO BE THE VILLAIN.

THEY *ALL* DO THAT!

TRY TO MAKE IT SEEM LIKE *I'M* NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

BUT *I* AM!

HE'S THE FAKE!

HE MUST DIE!

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH...

POLICE DETECTIVE JACOB RAVEN SITS AT HIS WINDOW SEAT, APART FROM THE REST OF THE DETECTIVES IN THE HOMICIDE BUREAU.

HIS THOUGHTS ARE ELSEWHERE.

ON A KILLER WHO HAS ELUDED HIM FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS.

A KILLER HE IS DETERMINED TO BRING TO JUSTICE.

RAVEN, YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO SEE THIS --

-- LOOKS LIKE YOUR MAN HAS SHOWN UP IN NEW YORK CITY!

SAME MARKINGS ON THE FACE AS HE LEFT ON... ON...

TAKE IT, JACOB. IT'S YOURS.

RAVEN STUDIES THE FAX.

THE PHOTOS OF THE DEAD BODIES LEAVE NO DOUBT IN HIS MIND.

IT'S HIM.

IT'S HIM.

THIS IS IT.

THE WEBBING'S ABOUT TO GIVE.

GOT TO WORK ON THE FORMULA TO MAKE IT A LITTLE *STRONGER* FOR FUTURE USE.

IF I *HAVE* A FUTURE!

WE'RE FREE!

HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED YOUR REST, LITTLE SPIDER, BECAUSE...

NAP TIME IS OVER!

YEAH! *DEFINITELY* COULD USE A STRONGER WEBBING!

ELSEWHERE...

PLEASE, GAVIN, DO NOT DO THIS!

SORRY, LITTLE BROTHER...

...YOU LET ME DOWN.

SNAP

SOMEONE PLEASE SEE TO IT THAT MY BROTHER IS GIVEN A PROPER FUNERAL.

AND HAVE FLOWERS SENT IN MY NAME.

YES, MISTER THORPE.

NOW, ON TO BUSINESS.

I HAVE *RETURNED* FROM MY TRIP ABROAD AND AM NOW --

-- WITH MY BROTHER'S DEMISE --

-- *OFFICIALLY* BACK IN CHARGE OF OUR ORGANIZATION.

I WANT REPORTS ON ANY POTENTIAL *INTERFERENCE* WITH OUR DAY TO DAY OPERATION.

POLICE OFFICERS, DISTRICT ATTORNEYS, ANY COMPETITORS. I WANT NAMES.

SPIDER-MAN HAS BEEN KNOWN TO SLOW THINGS DOWN.

EXCELLENT, SIR.

NOW...

...HOW DO WE GO ABOUT *ELIMINATING* THIS SPIDER-MAN?

BACK IN TIMES SQUARE...

IS THAT THE *BEST* YOU'VE GOT?

WE HARDLY *FELT* IT!

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PUT A LITTLE MORE OOMPH INTO THE OLD PUNCHEROOS IF YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE THROUGH THE NIGHT!

HE'S *RIGHT.*

I'M THROWING EVERYTHING I'VE GOT AT HIM AND IT'S HAVING NO EFFECT.

HIS *COSTUME* IS ABSORBING ALL THE BLOWS.

HE IS HERE.

AND THINGS AREN'T GOING WELL FOR HIM.

THIS IS GOOD.

TIME TO SAY NITEY-NITE, LITTLE FAKER!

YOU *LOSE!*

THIS IS GOING TO BE TRICKY, BUT...

...I'VE GOT *NOTHING* LEFT TO LOSE.

NOT YET.

THOOP

A COUPLE OF LITTLE VITAMINS? IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO?

WHAT WAS THAT? WHAT... DID... YOU...

...DO...

...TO...

...US!

SHOT THE *IMPACT WEBBING* BETWEEN THE COSTUME AND THE MAN WITHIN.

IF THEY'RE PARTNERED THE WAY I READ ABOUT...

"...NOW I JUST SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR IT TO DO ITS THING.

"SPREAD OUT... GROW AND...

"*PUSH* THE LIVING COSTUME AWAY FROM THE MAN."

WHICH LEAVES HIM WIDE OPEN FOR A *STINGER!*

AAARRGH

THAT *HURT!*

HE'S TURNING THE TIDE OF THE BATTLE.

HE ALWAYS WAS THE LUCKY ONE.

YOU CAN'T KILL US!

YOUR WEBBING AND YOUR STINGERS ONLY MAKE US ANGRY!

NOT LOOKING TO KILL YOU! JUST SETTING UP...

...THIS SHOT!

ALWAYS LUCKY.

WE WILL GNAW ON YOUR SPINE FOR THAT!

YOU CAN'T BEAT US!

THINK AGAIN!

YOU'RE DONE!

EVEN WHEN HE SHOULD HAVE DIED...

SOMEONE SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS TO YOU LONG AGO.

...HE FOUND LIFE.

SOMEONE SHOULD HAVE MADE SURE THAT YOU WOULDN'T BE SET FREE.

NOW HE HAS RETURNED, TAKEN ON ANOTHER COSTUME...

I'M THE SOMEONE TO FINALLY DO IT!

...AND NOW I'VE TAKEN A COSTUME AS WELL..

FOR NOW I'LL WAIT.

HIS TIME WILL COME SOON ENOUGH.

THEN HE'LL BE GIVEN THE MARK OF KAINE!

I WATCH.

I WAIT.

BUT SOON...

...VERY SOON...

THE COSTUME NOW?

GREAT! I CAN'T CATCH A BREAK TONIGHT!

THOUGH WEAKENED BY THE BATTLE, THE ALIEN SYMBIOTE REACTS TO DEFEND THE UNCONSCIOUS EDDIE BROCK.

IT REACHES OUT TO THE ENTITY WHICH DEFEATED ITS HOST...

...SEEKING TO ENGULF...TO DESTROY IT.

CONTACT IS MADE.

IMMEDIATELY, THE SYMBIOTE SENSES SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT REILLY.

SENDING OUT MORE TENDRILS, IT SEEKS A BONDING.

A SYMBIOSIS.

AND THEN...

NO!

GET OUT OF MY MIND!

THE SCARLET SPIDER'S STRENGTH -- AND HIS REJECTION -- PROVE TOO MUCH FOR THE ALREADY WEAKENED SYMBIOTE...

THE IMPACT OF ITS FALL KICKING UP A CLOUD OF DUST.

THEN...HAVING DONE WHAT HE SET OUT TO DO...

...BEN REILLY COLLAPSES.

LATER...

THE GUARDSMEN HAVE ARRIVED AND CONTAINED BOTH BROCK AND THE ALIEN SYMBIOTE.

THIS TIME WE'RE GOING TO KEEP THE TWO OF THEM AS FAR APART AS POSSIBLE.

THANKS. YOU'VE SUCCEEDED WHERE OTHERS HAVE FAILED.

I DID IT!

I BEAT VENOM!

MAYBE IT'S TIME TO START CLAIMING SOME SORT OF LIFE FOR MYSELF.

THERE'S NOTHING TO STAND IN MY WAY...

...NOTHING AT ALL!

NEXT ISSUE:

THE RETURN OF THE GRIM HUNTER AND...WHO IS KAINE?